

Bloomington/Monroe County Human Rights Commission

Director's Quarterly Report

October to December 2024

I. Discrimination Complaints

- A. Pending from previous quarters
 - 1. None.
- B. New cases
 - 1. Commissioner Shadday's national origin discrimination in housing case
 - a. Filed October 2024
 - b. Settlement negotiations in progress following investigation
 - 2. Commissioner Jackson's racial discrimination in employment case
 - a. Filed October 2024
 - b. Investigation in progress.
 - 3. Commissioner Crisovan's racial discrimination in housing case
 - a. Filed November 2024
 - b. Investigation in progress.
 - 4. Commissioner Baker's disability discrimination in housing case
 - a. Filed December 2024
 - b. Investigation in progress
- C. Complaints filed with other jurisdictions
 - 1. None.

II. Miscellaneous Inquiries

- A. A wheelchair user reported that a private dumpster was blocking a curb ramp. Called the company to have it moved.
- B. A woman with a disability who requested that maintenance staff wear a mask when entering her apartment was frustrated that they never remembered to do so. Suggested that she request a reasonable accommodation from her property manager and file a complaint if they did not accommodate her.
- C. A man missed work after he became temporarily disabled due to a car accident and was written up. Suggested he request a reasonable accommodation with a doctor's letter for adjustments to his work or time off.
- D. An individual sent a mass publication to many human rights commissions describing human rights abuses outside of the United States.
- E. An individual in another county was refused the accommodation of an ASL interpreter in court. Out of our jurisdiction; referred to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and Indiana Disability Justice Leadership.
- F. A woman was appalled by an inaccessible restroom in a local restaurant when she ate there with a friend who has a disability. She questioned

whether it was legal. Explained that the ADA has no enforcement mechanisms beyond private lawsuits. She decided to tell her friends not to visit the restaurant because of the lack of accessibility.

- G. A woman with disabilities is going through eviction proceedings and was referred to the BMCHRC, although she did not make specific allegations of discrimination. Suggested she reach back out when she knows more, as she hoped it would be resolved in court.
- H. An incarcerated man alleged discrimination by an online criminal record database that made it difficult for him to find employment. Expressed that the database itself was neutral and that employers have the right to base employment decisions on one's criminal record, but that he could reach out to us if he encountered discrimination based on his race or housing status.
- I. A woman fell at a bus stop that she felt was inaccessible. Referred to Bloomington Transit.
- J. A Black man felt that a landlord was overcharging and requested that City attorneys review the lease. Established after an initial conversation that this was not a discrimination complaint and referred him to a private attorney as we cannot provide legal advice.
- K. A man with multiple mental health disabilities was arrested following a mental health crisis and felt that the Bloomington Police Department did not follow proper protocol. Referred him to the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the internal BPD complaint form as we cannot investigate a branch of Bloomington city government.
- L. A man complained about issues in the mobile home park where he lives. Referred to the Environmental Public Health Division, a state agency that inspects mobile home parks and campgrounds, as we have no jurisdiction over mobile home parks.
- M. An individual wanted to know if she was covered under the living wage ordinance. Shared the information and FAQs at bloomington.in.gov/business/living-wage.
- N. A previously unhoused woman had been offered a temporary living solution but was being removed. She felt it could be for discriminatory reasons. Referred to the Stride Center as she was in crisis and needed immediate mediation.
- O. A woman with a disability has serious maintenance issues in her apartment that are endangering her health. She is in Ellettsville and out of jurisdiction. Directed to Town of Ellettsville government and encouraged her to continue working with her doctor to request accommodations of her landlord.
- P. A woman called about maintenance issues in her neighbor's apartment. Referred to HAND.
- Q. A Black man was fired from his job in 2023 and felt that it was a biased decision, but no longer remembers details of the incident. This happened outside the BMCHRC's 180 day statute of limitations.

- R. A Black woman from Michigan described being treated with suspicion and questioned by the police in a chain store where she was the only Black shopper. Directed her to the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.
- S. A woman alleged disability discrimination when her lease was not renewed. Gathering more information about the situation.

III. Publicity

- A. Emailed monthly newsletter, *Rights Stuff*, to 100+ individuals and organizations and placed physical copies in City Hall and the Monroe County Public Library (downtown branch).
- B. Updated BMCHRC Facebook Page
- C. "Bloomington closed captioning ordinance to become first in the state," by Clayton Baumgarth for Indiana Public Media. (October 3, 2024).
- D. Shermis interviewed on the closed captioning ordinance on Indiana Newsdesk, Episode 1214. (October 4, 2024).
- E. "Bloomington again scores perfectly on LGBTQ+ inclusivity survey," by Sophie Kaelble for Indiana Public Media (December 6, 2024).
- F. "TVs in Public Places Must Show Closed Captions Jan. 1, " by Greg Siering for *Bloom Magazine* (December 2024)
- G. Commissioner Lilliana Young interviewed on the 812 Podcast, Episode 152. (December 18, 2024).

IV. Networking/Education

- A. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the Council for Community Accessibility (CCA).
- B. Shermis and Vosmeier attended monthly meetings for the CCA Accessibility Committee.
- C. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the CCA Transportation and Mobility Committee.
- D. Shermis attended bi-weekly meetings of the City's Digital Accessibility Workgroup.
- E. Shermis, Vosmeier, and Coover attended monthly meetings for the Nonprofit Alliance's Community Outreach Breakfast.
- F. Shermis attended monthly meetings for the Thriving Connections Economic Stability Advisory Group.
- G. Shermis and Vosmeier attended the Disabilities Service Providers Coalition meeting on October 9, 2024.
- H. Shermis hosted Meet the Funders with the Nonprofit Alliance on October 30, 2024.
- I. Shermis attended the Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs meeting on October 30, 2024.
- J. Shermis and Vosmeier hosted Gather 'round the Table with the CCA on November 4, 2024.

- K. Shermis attended the Indiana Human Rights Commissions Consortium meeting on November 20, 2024.
- L. Young hosted, and Shermis and Vosmeier attended, the Transgender Day of Remembrance vigil on November 20, 2024.
- M. Shermis volunteered at Winter Wonderland with the Commission on the Status of Black Males on December 14, 2024.
- N. Shermis attended trainings on “Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices” (10/09/2024), “Understanding the ADA’s Interactive Process: How Employers and Employees Should Discuss Requests for Accommodation” (10/15/2024), and “Essential Strategies for Creating Accessible Social Media Content” (11/26/2024).
- O. Vosmeier attended trainings on “Bridges to Work: SSI/SSDI” (11/20/2024), “Indiana Advisory Committee Briefing” (11/22/2024), “Essential Strategies for Creating Accessible Social Media Content” (11/26/2024), and “Accessible Bus and Van Transportation” (12/05/2024).

V. ADA and Accessibility

- A. Shermis and Vosmeier worked on implementation of the closed captioning ordinance and created a press kit used to promote it.
- B. Shermis worked with the IT Department to review vendors that will work with the City on a digital accessibility strategic plan.
- C. Shermis and Vosmeier worked within the CCA Accessibility Committee to implement BlueDAG accessibility software.
- D. Shermis assisted with evaluation of tactile map proposals for Switchyard Park.
- E. Shermis reviewed with the Engineering Department on-street parking for questions of accessibility, particularly for wheelchair users and van parking.